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SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE APPRECIATION FOR U.S. HUMANITARIAN  
ASSISTANCE

REF: A. MANILA 1624  
[1](#)B. MANILA 1582 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In response to USG humanitarian assistance provided in the wake of the June 21-22 Typhoon Frank, Philippine Foreign Secretary Alberto G. Romulo sent a warm, expansive letter of thanks to the Ambassador. The Foreign Secretary underscored the Philippines' heartfelt gratitude for the disaster-relief efforts of the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan and its accompanying vessels, the aircraft of which flew more than 300 sorties and provided more than a half-million pounds of badly-needed supplies to areas hardest-hit by the deadly storm. USG humanitarian assistance such as that provided following Typhoon Frank, as well as the recent visit of the U.S. Navy hospital ship USNS Mercy, receive widespread and positive coverage in national media, generate goodwill toward the United States, and bolster bilateral relations. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Typhoon Frank (international name "Fengshen") swept through the central Philippines June 21-22 with devastating effect, causing an estimated \$260 million in damage to agriculture and infrastructure, while claiming the lives of perhaps as many as 1,500 people (reftel A). Following on the June 24 Oval Office meeting between President Bush and Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan and its carrier strike force were dispatched from Hong Kong to assist in relief efforts, arriving off Panay Island June 25. Helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft from the Reagan and other vessels began disaster-relief efforts almost immediately, and in the course of eight days, delivered more than a half-million pounds of bottled water, canned foods, tarps, medical supplies, and other badly-needed materials. USG relief efforts were coordinated by a multiagency team on site for more than a week, and included a June 29 trip to the area by the Ambassador. In the immediate aftermath of the storm, these efforts undoubtedly saved many lives, especially among infants and the elderly.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Secretary Romulo's letter reads in part:  
"The USS Ronald Reagan, berthed in Hong Kong, sped through the South China Sea, bringing humanitarian assistance that relieved pain and suffering and gave hope to those whose lives were grievously altered by the unfortunate event. Filipinos felt the compassion, care, and generosity of the American people through the men and women of the USS Ronald Reagan. During this time of distress, once again the United States and the American people showed how they were solidly behind the Philippines and the Filipino people. This and many other acts of kindness are meaningful facets of the multi-dimensional friendship shared by the Philippines and the United States, one that in Thomas Fuller's words "multiplies joys and divides griefs." On behalf of the Philippine Government and the Filipino people, I express my profound gratitude to the Government of the United States for

the timely and valuable support for the victims of Typhoon Frank."

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: Romulo's letter echoes similar sentiments expressed by Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Governor Datu Zaldy Ampatuan, who likewise provided an official letter of thanks in response to the May 29 - June 17 visit of the U.S. Navy hospital ship USNS Mercy, which provided medical and veterinary care for 25,000 patients from Mindanao and the disaster-prone region of Samar in the central Philippines. Such humanitarian exercises on the part of the U.S. military receive widespread attention in national media, and there is concrete evidence from national polls that the assistance rendered materially affects Philippine citizens' perception of the United States in a positive manner. END COMMENT.  
KENNEY